



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

December 2017 Newsletter

Restoring Native Colorado River Cutthroats

In the natural world, it's a well-known fact that our ecosystems function best when populated with plants, fish and wildlife native to that area. With that in mind, in 2015 and 2016, Pinedale fish managers chemically treated nine miles of Bare Creek in the northern Wyoming Range to remove nonnative trout. Similar to LaBarge Creek in the Wyoming Range, the goal is to restore Bare Creek with genetically pure native Colorado River Cutthroat (CRC) trout. Intensive sampling and genetic analysis found that Maki Creek, a tributary to North Cottonwood Creek, was the only suitable source of genetically pure Colorado River Cutthroats in the entire Cottonwood Creek drain-



A Colorado River cutthroat trout, one of four subspecies of cutthroat trout native to Wyoming.

age. Earlier this fall, fish managers collected Colorado River cuts from Maki Creek and held them in the stream overnight. The following day, using horses equipped with specialized panniers for carrying fish and fresh oxygen (Left), the fish were transported six miles over the hydrologic divide to a rendezvous point on North Cottonwood Creek. There, the fish were loaded into a tank on a stocking truck (Below), which transported them directly to Bare Creek for release. A total of 55 pure strain Colorado River cutthroats were released into Bare Creek in this initial stocking. Fish managers plan to collect and transplant fish again in 2018 and 2019 to repopulate Bare Creek with its native fish.



Photos: (Upper Left) Horse panniers equipped with oxygen bottles to keep fish alive over long treks. (Left) Pinedale Fish Biologist Darren Rhea with his horse "Leon" packing 250 pounds of fish and water over the divide between maki and Bare Creek drainages. (Right) Pinedale Fish Supervisor Hilda Sexauer hands over fish to Alysia Henderson from the Daniel Hatchery to be transported and stocked into Bare Creek.





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Sublette Deer Herd Numbers

Pinedale Wildlife Biologist Dean Clause, along with area game wardens, recently completed the annual post-hunt season deer survey for the Sublette mule deer herd. As expected, with last year's hard winter, the number of fawns was as low as it has been in many years at approximately 49 fawns per 100 does. The buck ratios stayed decent at 34 bucks per 100 does. Managers do not attempt to make a population estimate based on the total number of deer counted during the survey as it is just a sizeable sample, but the number of deer seen does tend to give a picture of the population trend. This year a total of 6,531 deer were counted in the Sublette Herd, which was

a 39% decline from the sample of 10,640 counted in 2016. This gives an idea of the number of deer that were lost in last year's hard winter. Wildlife managers are likely to again propose conservative hunting seasons, but what the herd really needs to bounce back is consecutive years of mild winters and high fawn survival. The Game and Fish will be holding public meetings in local communities in January to update the public with the latest numbers, habitat conditions and research being conducted in both the Sublette and Wyoming Range herds. Look for further announcements with the details on when and where these meetings will take place.

Mule Deer Poaching Incidents

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department report that they had two mule deer poaching incidents last month. Officials caught up with the individual who illegally shot a buck mule deer south of Pinedale on November 12. The buck was killed along the Boulder Lake Road. The mule deer hunting had closed on October 6. The deer was seized and the individual has been charged with taking a deer out of season and shooting from a public road.

"I would like to send out a huge thank you to the individuals from local and surrounding communities who assisted in bringing this case to closure," said South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft. "We often rely on tips and information from the public regarding wildlife violations and this case is a good example of the public and Game and Fish personnel working together to protect Wyoming's wildlife."

However, Game and Fish officials are still seeking information on a second buck mule deer that was illegally shot northeast of Buckskin Crossing, off of the Lander Cut-Off Road (CR 23-132) near Long Draw. It is believed the deer was likely killed November 9 or 10. The buck deer was shot during a closed season and only the antlers were removed from the animal (photo above).



Anyone with possible information regarding this second poaching incident, or who was in the area and may have noted suspicious vehicles or activities, is encouraged to call the Pinedale Game and Fish office at 1-800-452-9107, the STOP POACHING hotline at 1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847) or the South Pinedale Game Warden, Jordan Kraft, at 307-367-2470.



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From the Front Desk

Pinedale Game and Fish office managers Lori Johnson and Kristen Draney would like to encourage everyone to swing by the Game & Fish office to take advantage of a great Wyoming Wildlife Christmas offer. Through the month of December you can get a full year subscription for just \$10, and they will even throw in the new 2018 calendar for just \$12.95! They make a great Christmas gift for family and friends!

Late Hunt Seasons

Some November snow storms brought elk down to lower elevations making them more accessible to hunters. Pinedale Region game wardens spent considerable time checking elk hunters with the increased activity. Citations were issued for shooting from the road, failure to tag, taking an over limit, taking wrong sex, and hunting with wrong license. Warden Haley is investigating a gross over limit of elk in Hunt Area 93 where four elk were shot and left and a fifth elk was wounded.

November is also the time several mule deer bucks are reported dead on their winter range and need to be investigated. Often it is the result of natural mortality from bucks fighting during the rut or related injuries. Several bucks have been looked at in the Pinedale and Big Piney area.



Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas checks on the plate of a vehicle in the Daniel area.



Evaluating Stream Structures

Pinedale Aquatic Habitat Biologist Luke Schulz is currently conducting an assessment of Habitat structures on the upper Green River near the forest boundary. The structures were constructed between 1987 and 1993 with some started to show signs of age. Some of the structures are still providing good fish habitat, but others are not and will likely need to be removed.